1: Ammar E, 1-5 (1951) 1954
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Chapter Ten

INDIGENOUS LEARNING AND TEACHING

121 It has been pointed out by some anthropologists that in homogeneous primitive societies, the attention is focused more on the desirability of learning over against the desirability of teaching.[1] As the cultural alternatives are so limited in such communities, the individual finds himself learning the accepted skills, habits and attitudes which everyone else agrees that he would wish to learn. The desirability of learning the socially acceptable modes of living is contrasted, on the whole, with modern societies where individuals are taught various things on which there is no consensus of agreement that everyone has a desire to know. This distinction between folk and modern societies reflected in the different methods of learning and teaching is, of course, not an absolute distinction. For instance, in folk communities teaching does take place, e.g. in certain ceremonies, in the constant corrections and admonitions to children, and so on; and learning does take place in modern societies in the family and group situations.

876 In folk communities in general, the educative process, whether through learning or teaching, is coterminous with life, and none of its situations is deliberately singled out or isolated for drill or special training.[2] In Silwa the popular saying tends to confirm that the desire to learn is preferable to the need of being taught: 'If the boy does not learn, time will teach him the hard way.' This is also in line with the traditions of Moslem society, where people have been expected to seek knowledge as 'knowledge does not seek people'. Whether in search of special skills or religious enlightenment, the master did not go seeking pupils, but rather the converse. In the Arabic language the word for pupil or student (talib) literally means 'the searcher', he who requests and requires knowledge.

It should also be pointed out here that folk life in Silwa has been relatively independent of the influence of the written word, and it has been affected by it only through a small number of people who were considered

[1] Margaret Mead, 'Our Educational Emphases in Primitive Perspective', in *The American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. XLVIII, 1943, p. 634.
[2] M. Fortes, *Social and Psychological Aspects of Education in Taleland*, p. 27.

1: Ammar E, I-5 (1951) 1954
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to be specialists in transmitting to others the religious knowledge of the Holy Book and the pious ancestors. The oral means of communicating and committing to memory the accumulated experiences is the best guide for perpetuating the group's tradition. It is not surprising, then, that old people are considered as knowing more than the young, and that, on these grounds, they are worthy of respect and obedience. The young have to wait many years before they can wield the same prestige and authority, for the instruments of wisdom may only be acquired through the passage of time. It is not unusual to hear people who wish to assert their position or to impress others with their views saying: 'I am a man who has witnessed both the pre-Islamic (jahiliya) and Islamic eras.'[1]

Good memory is certainly a great asset and indeed highly valued in Silwa, and the person with a good memory is usually described as the one with 'the full head'. The ability to remember names, places, events, and genealogies enhances the person's popularity and makes his participation and consultation desirable in social activities. The emphasis on memory training is impressed on the child as early as its efforts to learn to talk. Mothers utter a few words for the child to repeat, and then ask it to go round to all those who may be present, and say these words to each in turn, and this is recognized as the best method for the teaching of language. One of the favourite amusements of adults with children is to test the latter in reciting the names of their families in genealogical order. Very frequently, however, the adults may purposely interject incorrect names to mislead the children. Some children between the age of three and four, on being asked by the writer to recite their family names, would tell him as many as four or five of their names (the first name, followed by the father's name, the grandfather's, the great-grandfather's and so on).[2] In a symbolical way, the mother encourages the child to eat pigeon's head, as it is believed that this will foster the child's alertness of memory in later years of life.

It would be very difficult to determine here to what extent the importance laid on memory and memorization has been the product of the Islamic view of learning. It should be mentioned, however, in this connection that knowledge, for the Moslem scholars, was not so much a reaching out to the unknown (research), as it was a mechanical process of amassing the 'known'; the known being eternal and given, is unchangeable. Thus the acquisition of information and the deduction from accepted premises were the most important methods of knowledge.[3] A learned man

[1] This is, of course, an artificial claim such as the English expression, 'I don't know him from Adam'. The historical sense amongst the villagers, especially the older generation, is mainly thought of in the partition between the two eras, the pre-Islamic and the Islamic.

[2] It must be pointed out that in Silwa, or for that matter in Egypt as a whole, there is no system of first names and surnames. In Silwa, every person is always called by his first name. Unfamiliarity or respect requires only the addition of the title 'sheikh' in front of the first name.

[3] H. A. R. Gibb, *Modern Trends in Islam*, pp. 64–8.

1: Ammar E, 1-5 (1951) 1954
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[812] [794] [562] learned women who had finished a Kuttab course and proceeded to a higher educational course in either al-Azhar or the College Mosques (Madrasah); but their numbers were very small in comparison.[1] I was told by one of the Kuttab Sheikhs that some of the pious ancestors recommended that women should only know a few chapters of the Koran to enable them to say their prayers, and also to learn particularly Surat al-Nur.[2] He went on further to say that Imam Malik thought it inadvisable to teach reading and writing to girls as well as to the sons of 'tyrants and oppressors'.[3]

The following is an account of how a boy spends his day in the Kuttab. The day begins always before sunrise and the first boy who arrives in the morning opens the Kuttab door with the key which is usually hidden underneath the door or outside the threshold. The Sheikh (always called by the boys 'Our Master')[4] arrives later, usually after sunrise; until his arrival, the boys would be busy reciting their assigned portion of the Koran which they had written on their wooden tablets the day before. On the Sheikh's arrival, older or more advanced boys would one by one hand over their tablet to the Sheikh and go on reciting what is written on it, and on satisfying the Sheikh as to their proper and accurate memorizing, they would be asked to clean their tablets and proceed to the next assignment. The same procedure is followed with the younger boys. Those who have failed to satisfy the Sheikh by forgetting sentences or hesitating in the correct pronunciation would be asked to go on repeating their assignment to be heard again by the Sheikh later on. In his work in the Kuttab, the Sheikh, especially if he is blind, relies a great deal on one or two monitors ('areef).

[798] After proving that they have learnt their assignment, the boys are asked to wash their tablets with water, the drops of which must fall into a pot, and not be allowed to fall on to the ground as they contain the dissolved words of God on which no one should tread, as this is considered to be sacrilege (haram). This also applies to the tablet itself when the assignment is written on it, and a boy who drops it on the ground has to kiss it in respect. After washing the tablet with water, however, thus removing the previous writing, a layer of whitish clay is put on it to render the surface fit for writing again. The ink is made by the boys themselves, by mixing fine oven soot with ground roasted nuts of a gum tree together with some gum. This mixture is left for some time to brew before it is actually

[386] use d.

[1] D. B. MacDonald, *Aspects of Islam*, pp. 293–4.

[2] On looking up this Koranic chapter, the writer found that it mainly dealt with preventive measures against fornication and slander, and related the story of 'Aysha, the Prophet's wife, when she was slandered by enemies, and how God revealed the truth about her chastity.

[3] The writer had no opportunity of checking the truth of this statement attributed to Imam Malik.

[4] The Kuttab Sheikh is usually called by this title, 'Our Master', even by adults, especially the illiterate people—see Taha Hussein, *al-Ayyam* (An Egyptian Childhood).

1: Ammar E, I-5 (1951) 1954
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used. The pens are made out of maize stalks, the end being sharpened to a point by a razor. This point is then divided in the middle.

After the tablets have been dried in the sun the time for writing the new assignment comes. Monitors gather the boys around them and dictate to them, either from memory or from a copy of the Koran, what they should write. The monitor dictates to each of his pupils in turn, a sentence at a time, and so comes back to the first one, and this continues until the dictation is finished. Some of the beginners do actually use the tablets for writing without actually knowing how to write, although they might be able to recite the alphabet. What really happens is that the monitor manipulates the hand of his pupil on the tablet, or he may write the lines with his fingernail on the tablet, asking the young boy to trace his writing with the pen. He then asks each of the boys to read back to him what he has written. After this the monitors themselves start writing their assignment, which they should read to the Sheikh seated at his feet.

All this takes place in the morning (until about ten o'clock), after which the children are allowed an interval for breakfast. They go home for this and return after a short time to resume the second working period, which lasts until noon, and during which the boys will be reading their written assignment under the supervision of the monitors.[1] Sitting facing the walls, with their tablets in front of them, the boys will be reciting aloud their set texts and swaying their heads and bodies forwards and backwards. The babble and din of the Kuttab is the sure sign for the Sheikh that it is busy and hard-working, for immediately the din dies down, the Sheikh will incite his boys to raise their voices and get on with their work. If the boys persist in any disobedience, the Sheikh would use his stick, laying about him without exception, hitting their backs, whereupon their voices would rise and go again at full pitch. This repetition continues until noon, when the Sheikh claps his hands, letting the boys go for their lunch.

After the lunch recess the boys return to the Kuttab, each carrying a loaf of bread for the Sheikh. This has been selected by the mother as one of her best-baked loaves. Some children do not take loaves with them, but, as a result of an agreement between the Sheikh and the father, the former receives a stipulated amount of corn at the end of each harvest. The loaf, however, is a token of the teacher's work, and ideally, he who teaches the Holy Book is not expected to ask for a remuneration. In fact, the Sheikh receives in addition to the daily loaf certain gifts on various occasions, such as when the boy finishes his alphabet and begins to write the first chapter of the Koran, at the end of each section (juza) and so on. He also receives a white garment, in addition to other gifts, when the boy finishes the whole of the Koran.

The first part of the afternoon work in the Kuttab is taken up with

[1] The time in the Kuttab is not regulated by the hour, but is usually fixed either by the noisy arrival or departure of a train, or according to the shadow cast by the sun from the wall, or a boy's shadow.

1:Ammar E, I-5 (1951) 1954
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EDUCATION AND SOCIAL CHANGE

872 villagers consider the establishment of a primary school in their village as a sign of 'blessedness' enabling their boys to find some scope for work in government jobs, especially as the land resources are becoming increasingly limited. As one of the villagers put it, 'It is free education for which one had to go previously to Aswan or Cairo'. The new school accommodates 138 pupils in three grades. As expected, it has affected the number of boys who go to the Kuttab, the numbers of one of them declining from forty to fourteen. It has also affected the number of boys in the elementary school, especially those in the third grade who, instead of remaining in the school, preferred to go to the second or third grade of the primary school. The two following statements express the feeling of the boys about the new school:

[171 291] A boy of twelve said: 'We like the new school, as we wear suits (European), which are much nicer than the gallabiahs which we used to wear in the elementary school. The former is better than the latter in its lessons, order, and cleanliness.'

Another boy of eleven said: 'The primary school has more knowledge to teach. We wear an "effendi" suit, warmer and more beautiful than the gallabiah. We shall become government officials when we pass our examinations. Moreover, there are no girls in our new school.'

The boys and girls of the elementary school, in all the ten statements received, envy those boys of the primary school their 'effendi' dress, but equally assert that primary pupils are not better off than they in any way. They say: 'We have the same books and learn the same lessons, and are capable of challenging them in reading, or in the multiplication tables.'

• 212 After discussing the three educational institutions in the village, it is necessary to review the state of literacy in general. The writer could not possibly make a survey of the literate people in Silwa, but thinks that their percentage would certainly be little less than the average for the whole country. The following table shows the percentage of male and female literates for Egypt as a whole since 1907.[1]

TABLE VII

Literacy in Egypt, male and female

Year	*Total*	*Males*	*Females*
1907	5·4	9·8	1·1
1917	7·9	13·6	2·1
1927	13·8	22·9	4·7
1937	18·6	26·8	10·5

The general census for the year 1947 has not been published yet, but it

[1] The table is made by calculating the percentage for the figures given in the general census for the respective years.

1: Ammar E, 1-5 (1951) 1954
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is estimated that the total percentage of literacy for this year is about 25 per cent.[1]

It is worth noting here that there is no definite standard or critique for determining literacy in the official census in Egypt. Officials who conduct the census may consider a person literate if he or she can read a sentence in print. They might decide to include a person as literate on hearsay. Even if they take writing as one of the requirements for literacy, it is difficult to know exactly what criterion they adopt, and what type of writing or speed they require. A person is sometimes considered literate if he can sign his name.[2]

There is certainly a great improvement in the whole country since 1907 with regard to the percentage of literacy, especially in the age group between ten and nineteen. The following percentages show the state of literacy in different age ranges.

TABLE VIII

Literacy in different age ranges

Age	*1907* %	*Age*	*1917* %
0–9 ..	1·2	0–9 ..	3·2
10–14 ..	7·7	10–19 ..	10·2
15–19 ..	8·4	20–29 ..	9·6
20 and over ..	7·0	30–39 ..	8·5
		40–49 ..	8·7
		50–59 ..	8·1
		60 and over ..	4·6

Age	*1927* %	*1937* %
5–9 ..	11·8	38·6
10–14 ..	18·2	21·8
15–19 ..	14·9	16·7
20–29 ..	14·8	14·7
30–39 ..	13·7	13·4
40–49 ..	13·2	13·0
50–59 ..	8·3	7·6
60 and over not stated ..	10·0	18·9[3]

[1] Ministry of Social Affairs, *In the Service of the Egyptian Village*, pamphlet 2 (Arabic), Government Press, Cairo, 1951.

[2] It is considered that literacy requirement must include the ability to translate the signs not only into sounds, but also into meanings. It is suggested that a good test for writing ability is to dictate one hundred words from a basic word list asking the person to write them down. Unesco, *Fundamental Education*, Paris, 1947, p. 24.

[3] Worked out according to the 1907 Census, p. 142; 1917 Census, p. 563; 1927 Census, p. 565; 1937 Census, pp. 210–12.

1: Ammar E, I-5 (1951) 1954
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●212 This improvement is also obvious in Silwa itself: ten years ago there were two public scribes in the village to whom people would resort for letter-writing or making formal complaints, but they have had to close their establishment on not finding enough customers. The spread of literacy in Egypt has generally been made more difficult because of the difference between the colloquial and the classical Arabic, which is taught [197] in schools. The relation of the former to the latter is almost like that of Swiss German to High German. Moreover, some reformers maintain that it takes too long with the present script for the child to become sufficiently literate, and this difficulty has prompted some Egyptian scholars to advocate a Latin script instead of the present Arab script.[1] The numerous rules of inflection, changing vowels and consonants, and the diacritical marks attached to the words according to meaning, make correct reading a tiresome task. It has often been said, and not without some measure of justification, that in European languages, one has to read in order to understand, while in Arabic, one has to understand in order to read.

212 In Silwa, however, though people are increasingly attaching more 871 importance to the ability to read and write, this instrument cannot be considered as a vital motivating force in their lives. The villagers' traditions can be mainly communicated orally, with a few literate persons on whom would devolve the responsibility of communicating the cultural and religious aspects requiring literacy. It is not surprising, then, that some of the villagers, especially most women, who had learnt reading and writing at a compulsory school, have almost relapsed into illiteracy. The remoteness and relative isolation of the village, along with the poverty in cultural influences such as newspapers, books, and other suitable reading [804] material, explain to a great extent this phenomenon. The degree of literacy could be better assessed, however, from the kind of literature that is read in the village, and from the extent to which the reading ability is utilized. There are hardly any books in the village, except those few related to religious matters in one way or another. The following is a list of all the books which are acquired and read by the villagers:

Books on Jurisprudence (fikh): *Matn Assafti, al-Ishmawi, Sharh abu-al Hasan, matn Addardiri, Risalat Ibn abi-Zaid al-Kairuwani, Azzurkani.*

Burdat-al-Busiri (The Mantle Ode), a hymn in praise of the Prophet.

Dalail al-Khairat. A book read usually for propitiation, and in petitions to God.

Matn al-Jawhara in Divinity (Tawheed—Unity of God).

Manakib Assalihen (The Virtue of Pious Men).

Mankib al-Hassan wal-Hussain (The Virtues of the Prophet's Cousins).

Manakib Assayid al-Badawi.

Kasaid ahl Attarik (Poems of the Mystics).

Certain books from which texts of charms are copied.

Mawlid al-Manawi (Prophet's Life-story).

[1] A. F. Fahmy, *Latin Script for the Writing of Arabic* (Arabic), Cairo, 1944.

1: Ammar E, I-5 (1951) 1954
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Mawlid Salma (Prophet's Life-story).

These books are usually obtained from an itinerary vendor, who occasionally visits the village. Amongst those who own books, three persons actually possess the bulk of the books found in the village: they are the Sheikh of the recognized 'Kuttab', a village school teacher, and an ambitious young man who owns a shop in the village at present, after having spent more than ten years in Cairo and Alexandria. Yet perhaps none of these people possess more than a dozen books.

As to the spread of the newspapers, there are ten persons in this community of over three thousand people who buy newspapers, although not regularly. They get them from a distributor travelling by local train. Three of the newspaper buyers are shopkeepers, while two others are teachers in the compulsory school. News naturally infiltrates to a large extent through reading aloud the news in the village gatherings, or through borrowing the newspapers. Up to 1951 there was no radio set in the village and, of course, no cinema, thus contact with the outside world, as far as these aids are concerned, was entirely absent.

The extent of literacy in this community could also be expressed in the number of people who have been to any school other than those educational institutions existing in the village (before the establishment of the primary school in the village). The following is a list enumerating all the boys and men who are receiving some kind of education outside the village:[1]

Nine boys in the primary school in Aswan (under 12 years old).

One boy in the secondary school in Aswan (14 years old).

Six boys in the Training College for Elementary Teachers in Aswan.

Two elementary school teachers who are actually teaching in the village compulsory school.

One higher education.

In analysing these educated people from the village, it is important to show the various incentives for their education. Four of those in the primary school and the elementary training college are cousins: the father of two of them is an Azharite and a teacher at the village school, and it is not surprising that he should send his two sons to school in Aswan. Two years ago, however, his younger brother quarrelled with him, and decided to vie with him at every turn, even in sending two of his sons to the same schools as those of his brother. Two of the other boys are sons of a relatively well-off woman who forced her husband to divorce her. She then married a younger man, and managed to keep her two sons under her custody by sending them to school and personally bearing the expenses incurred by their education in Aswan, as the father himself could not do so. One of the boys in the primary school in Aswan is the son of a blind man who possesses practically no land and on receiving aid (£E2 a month) for his disability from the Ministry of Endowment, decided to send his son to school.

[1] There are no village girls at all who have received or are receiving education outside the village compulsory school.

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
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to climb down and join the festive crowds he found that he could not move, and that, when he tried to do so, his limbs were rigid and his whole body paralysed. On seeing the plight of the wretched man cries to the sheikh were immediately raised. People came with drums and tambourines, others sang and clapped their hands in rhythmic accompaniment to the music, till at last, after about two hours of such intercession, the man regained his power of locomotion, and so was able to move away.

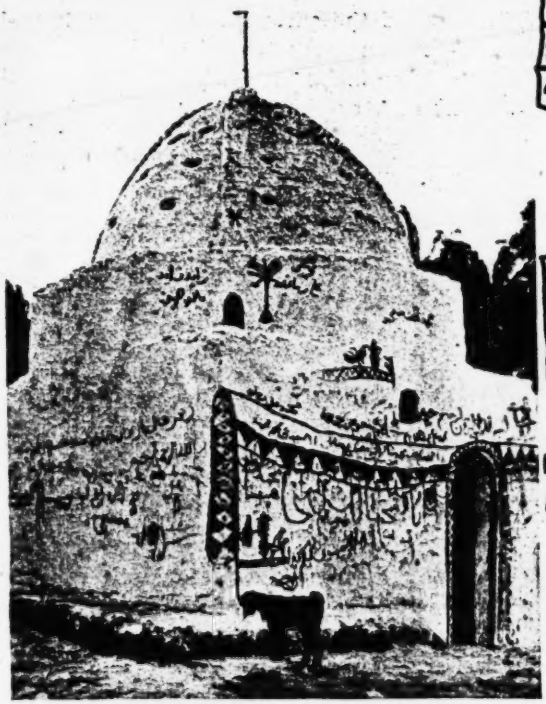

FIG. 140. TOMB OF THE SHEIKH UMBĀRAK
The external mural decorations are to be noted.

Some time after this exhibition of his power the sheikh ʿAbdu 'l-Laṭīf appeared to a man in a village a few miles distant, telling him to build him a tomb there. The people of this village went in triumph to the sheikh's native place and exultantly told the inhabitants that their sheikh had now come to them.

The original tomb still exists, but it is in a very dilapidated state, and no doubt in course of time it will wholly disappear, unless something happens to revive the veneration formerly paid to the holy man in his native village. Meanwhile, the people of the village where ʿAbdu 'l-Laṭīf's later resting-place is built hold a *mūlid* every year in honour of their acquired sheikh.

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
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Upper Egypt

CHAPTER XVI

SOME ANNUAL FESTIVALS

THE *Mūlid en-Nebi*, the annual celebration of the birthday of the Prophet, is of course the most important of all the festivals held in honour of Muslim saints. However, I shall content myself here with a description of some of the annual *mawālid* (plural of *mūlid*) held in honour of local village saints which I have attended myself during my six years' sojourn in Egypt.

The sheikh Umbārak is buried in a village in Middle Egypt, and a whitewashed domed building has been erected above his grave. One or two of the outside walls of his tomb are, as is customary, decorated with pictures descriptive of the pilgrimage to Mecca,[1] roughly sketched in red and blue paint, the remainder being inscribed with passages from the Ḳorān. Around the dome are small, what might almost be called clerestory windows, in each of which a lighted candle is placed every night. There is a female 'servant' attached to this sheikh, who is supposed to keep the tomb in order, receive the donations of devotees, and light the candles every evening. One wonders how she manages to carry out this work satisfactorily, as she is quite blind!

The *mūlid* held in honour of the sheikh Umbārak takes place in April and begins early in the afternoon, on the morning of which day similar festivals are inaugurated in certain neighbouring villages in honour of their own particular sheikhs.

At about two o'clock a large crowd collected in the vicinity of the sheikh's tomb, several people, chiefly women, seating themselves around it. The blind servant received donations from the faithful on behalf of the sheikh, part of the time having the sheikh's flag wrapped around her (Fig. 141). As the donors presented their gifts they recited the *Fātiḥah* in low and rapid tones. In the road which ran past the burial-ground, and in the adjacent palm-grove, the holiday-makers engaged in friendly conversation or indulged in various amusements (Fig. 142); and along the roadside booths

[1] See p. 245, Fig. 140.

2: Blackman E-5 (1920-1926) 1927
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Upper Egypt

CHAPTER XVII

THE VILLAGE STORY-TELLER AND HIS TALES

538 THE modern Egyptian peasants are as fond of stories as were their ancestors in the days of Herodotus. Since few of the older people can read or write they have largely to [217] depend for such entertainment on the public recitations of story-tellers. Most villages possess at least one story-teller, who, as a rule, has some trade with which he is engaged during the day. In the evening the male villagers are in the habit of congregating in one another's houses, or in some shop or *café*. To such a gathering the story-teller is a welcome addition, and he tells his [465] tales in return for very small sums of money presented to him by members of his audience. The story-teller may have taken [429] years to collect his tales, or he may have inherited them from his forbears. The peasant is an excellent *raconteur*, possessed of great imagination, very dramatic, and entirely free from self-consciousness.

538 Among my village friends are two or three story-tellers, and 124 from them I have collected and written down a large number of 114 tales. Some were related to me in my brother's desert camp the first year I was in Egypt. I would appoint a day for the story-teller to visit me, and, as the hour approached, I would see him and the schoolmaster who came with him to assist me in my translations of the stories riding across the lower desert on donkeys. On their arrival coffee was brought, and, when they had partaken [516] of this refreshment, the story-teller seated himself cross-legged on the ground, drew his robe around him, and, after some minutes' reflection, began one of his tales.

538 One of my story-teller friends, a cheery person, was a dyer by 115 trade, as, indeed, was made evident by the state of his hands, which were stained almost as dark a blue as his cotton clothes. When he was a young boy he was apprenticed to a firm of dyers, [463] and he would listen to stories told to his fellow-workmen as they plied their task. Having a retentive memory, he stored up all

donkey to the fields and the *gamoossa* to the canal, where he climbs on its back and sets it turning the *saqia*. The child learns how to cry out, how to chase off thieving birds with stones, how to pick and even plant cotton. He does not lack amusement, for he has plenty of companions. During the day, when the men are toiling in the fields and the women are busy in the house or by the canal, the whole village belongs to the children. It is they whom a visitor sees first. They paddle stark naked in the pond, and learn to swim. They have bulging bellies, for they eat anything and everything. They play in the dust, spinning an onion as a top, hopping on one leg and holding the other heel with their hands, or shooting with a catapult (*nibla*) at date-palms or birds. When they are a little older they play at *sîga*, a kind of marble game with small pebbles which have to be moved into forty-nine holes made in the sand.

At about the age of seven the young fellah is circumcised, and thus introduced into the world of men. At this stage he has to go to the elementary school (*ilzamiya*), at least in the mornings. His parents are bound to send him, under pain of a fine of twenty piastres, or fifty for a second offence. 95% of the fellaheen are illiterate, and the Government wishes to wipe out this disgrace from the next generation. The 1923 Constitution decreed that education should be compulsory, but it is only since 1935 that this order has begun to take effect. Schools are being established all over the countryside. Gradually sites are being found in the villages, schools set up, and teachers appointed. Every year, places that within living memory had never seen a teacher are provided with a complete teaching staff. In 1946 there should be 4,600 free elementary schools, and the whole child population will be receiving instruction ([61]).

The parents do not understand these new ideas. Though accustomed to other tyrannical institutions, they do not resign themselves to this. Some Upper Egyptians of 'Ezbet Balkan, who had been fined for not sending their children to the compulsory Government school, attacked the teachers and wounded them. The peasants care little for education. They only want their children to help them to increase their earnings. Moreover, most villages are still served, according to the ancient system, by a *kuttab*, in which a blind teacher, seated on the ground, gathers a few children round him and teaches them the Koran.

3: Ayrout M-5 (ca. 1935) 1945
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Egypt MR1

and new Faculties and Departments have been created. In 1942 a second University was founded, at Alexandria. The Government's primary and secondary schools count their pupils by hundreds of thousands, and are endowed with all the latest improvements. Then there are numerous private schools of older foundation. Even the ancient Moslem University of Al-Azhar has felt the wind of reform, and has established new branches, the Institutes of Shubra, Tanta, Assiut, and Qena. Three thousand teachers are busy with elementary education in the villages. Egyptian publications, whether newspapers, reviews, or books, compare in style and content with the best in Europe, and are a model for all the Arabic-speaking countries. Yet the most important newspaper, *Al-Ahram*, the *Times* of the Near East, has a daily circulation of not more than 100,000, and the farmers' review, *Zamil el-Fellah*, which is published by the Ministry of Agriculture and distributed free, prints only 48,000 copies.

The scientists, scholars, and men of letters who come to Egypt every year for congresses or conferences find in Cairo or Alexandria audiences as eager and open-minded as those of Paris. They are astonished and say so.

Thinkers and students are busy creating a national language, a national music, a national theatre and cinema, something which shall be specifically Egyptian, and not just vaguely Islamic. It is very interesting to follow this development of culture. But we must turn aside to see what is happening below.

Have the masses been caught up in this tide of renewal? Are they following the élite of the cities? The answer is: either not at all or at such a distance that no movement is discernible. Illiteracy still prevails among an overwhelming majority. The latest statistics have had to recognise it. (11) It may be that the fault lies with the English, who developed everything in Egypt except education; with the fellaheen themselves, who are not very gifted and show no eagerness to learn; or with a syllabus ill-adapted to their mentality and forced upon them with compulsory education. Whatever the cause the fact remains that 95% of the fellaheen can neither read nor write. Even if they know how to read, they remain strangers to all interchange of

212 ideas, for the literary language in which books and newspapers are written is unfamiliar to them (74).

184 The weakness and the sufferings of the fellaheen arise from their abysmal ignorance in a fast-progressing world. The revival which has just been described only accentuates their isolation and dependence.

178 At the same time, if within the mass no substantial changes can be recorded, outside it some progress may be seen, and inside there are some signs of future evolution.

There is a certain growth in the sense of social responsibility. Progressive Egypt is beginning to pay some attention to unprogressive Egypt, clumsily it may be, by fits and starts, and as yet more in theory than in practice, but at least with the desire to help those who cannot help themselves.

641 466 671 Today the fellah has legal rights. He is no longer subject to forced labour at the good pleasure of his masters. There is a code of law, and judges to apply it. It is true that the fellah does not always know how to make use of this, but the law exists, where formerly there was no defence.

641 636 'To put an end to the cruelty of the pasha, to let the fellah's wife and frightened child have what belongs to them', such was the work of Lord Cromer at the end of the nineteenth century (75). This High Commissioner, who gave much thought to the fellaheen, used all his power to obtain for them at least strict justice. The lash was made illegal, and [651 681 731 661] taxes were fixed at reasonable rates and periods. The fellah is no longer in constant terror of the *sarraf*. He knows how much he has to pay, and realises that if his field has suffered from flood, drought or fire, the tax is remitted. The venality of officials and the selfishness of big landowners often nullify the benefits of these measures. But they have their effect.

In 1912 Lord Cromer's successor, Lord Kitchener, also caused a law to be passed in favour of the fellah, whereby the dwelling of the small farmer, his necessary implements, two of his cattle and five feddans were exempt from seizure. To make the fellah's finances sounder and accustom him to some kind of system the same High Commissioner established Savings Banks in the villages, where the fellah was to [453] keep his savings. This institution, perhaps because it was

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735 is of graver consequence for the individual than for the group. In this poverty the fellah is too rich.

181 His ignorance and backwardness, his churlishness and servility, which contrast so strikingly with the refinement of the upper classes, are more tragic than his lack of means.

The fact that he does not feel the depth of his suffering is no reason why it should seem any the less degrading. On the contrary, when he feels it more keenly and becomes fully conscious of it, his deliverance will be on the way.

184 The real evils, then, are the fellah's lack of education
● 212 and culture, and the incomprehension or inaptitude, if not scorn and indifference, of those who might be helping him.

656
746 The greater number of official measures, for example, are thought out in offices quite remote from the fellaheen, and put into practice by officials who have nothing of the countryman in them. Whether they are concerned with health or education, agriculture or justice, they spring more from theory or from imitation of other countries than from a practical knowledge of the true state of affairs. Their starting-point is not the way of life and thought of the fellah, but a preconceived ideal. They are too interfering, and are imposed on the fellah in a hard, threatening manner. They are planted on him from outside, without ever arousing his interest or enlisting his help, so that he is unable to believe that the Government is genuinely trying to do him a service. And his distress remains the same as ever.

Here lies the explanation of the amazing series of failures which makes the pessimists say "It is no use doing anything for the fellaheen". Experience shows, however,
747 that private organisations of limited scope and resources, because they are working *with* the fellah and not merely *for* him, because they advise instead of commanding, and promise instead of threatening, have been able to gain his confidence, and in spite of unavoidable false starts have achieved excellent results.

One example is the model village of the Royal Agricultural Society, mentioned in the previous chapter. The finishing touch was put to this in December 1941 by the establishment of a 'Social Centre'.

Another case is the happy experiment tried on a large *'ezba* of 1600 feddans in Beheira, where the landowner, a

4:Walker E-4 (no date) 1934 MR13 Fellahin MR13
(ca. 1890)

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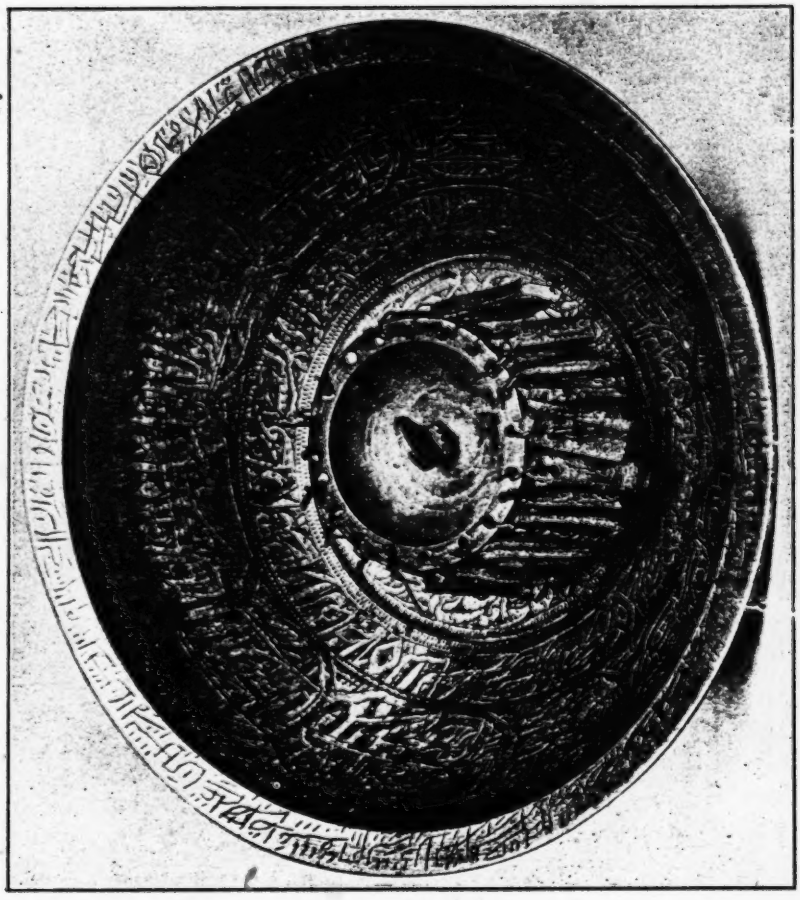
189
312
415



THE "FEAR" CUP (*Tâsat-al-Tarba*)

Facing p. 69

/83 cont'd/

(c) Amulets, called Hegab, pl. Ahgeba in Arabic. They are also symbolically called "Sigha" (jewelry), because they are made of silver or gold although /84/ they are amulets. These amulets, must be worn by the patient throughout his life. They are square, oval, rectangular or round "plates", with (9) rattles or stones attached. Some of them have certain words in Arabic or designs engraved. These designs may be human figures, fish, swords, stars or a crescent. They have different names, e.g. heart amulets worn on the heart, head amulets worn on the forehead; the possessed person may also wear rings on the thumbs or bracelets on their arms or legs.

(d) Candles and incense (Bukhur) which are burned during the Zar-ceremony also differ according to the spirit to which they are addressed. (10)

The Zar-ceremony

The possessed person has to take the following steps before starting a Zar-ceremony:

1. The patient must firstly consult the Kūdiya about her ailments.
2. The Kūdiya asks for some object belonging to the patient, usually a handkerchief. This is called "Attar", i.e. "trace". This will be kept by the Kūdiya for several days during which she will study it, get in contact with her spiritual world and thereby determine the particular spirit who took possession of her patient.

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(9) Similar plates with magical powers releasing from sickness and consecrated to the two gods Khonso and Ptah are known from Ancient Egypt at the time of the New Kingdom. See Erman's book "Egypt", the Arabic translation by Abu Baker and Moharm Kamel, Cairo 1952, p. 292

(10) Bukhur or incense is prepared under the supervision of the Kūdiya. It consists of Mastica, Ouda, Gawli, Murr Hijar, Kafur Tayar i.e. different kinds of aromatic woods etc. Bukhur was used also in Ancient Egypt; the priests used to begin the ceremonies in the temples by burning bukhur. See the Arabic translation of Erman. p. 295

8:Schaefer A-5 (1900-1901) 1904
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Upper Egypt

once fixed, he would patiently repeat it four or five times for correction, and proved himself an excellent commentator, in spite of some misconceptions, which, undoubtedly, may have slipped in. He could neither read nor write, which fact I think was, for my purpose, very fortunate; and I was glad, also, that he knew no other language than his own. It is a pleasure to recall the time, when I spent the greater part of my leisure moments, squatting before the low, reed-covered watchman's-hut, built of the stones from the debris of the excavations, while I looked into the alert face of the one-eyed, old man, and talked with him. I wrote down the songs at once in the transliteration. Only in the case of doubtful words, in order to make certain of the consonants, did I employ a scribe to take down the Arabic at Maḥmûds dictation.[1] I hope, therefore, to be able to offer a comparatively reliable Arabic text. Maḥmûd declared decidedly several times, that none of the songs was composed by himself. The title of my book, therefore, must not be misunderstood; it is intended only to state, that it presents the entire fund of songs which Maḥmûd knew. They are songs which are

[1]) It is a veritable cross, that the uneducated scribes, who never pronounce the qāf, either do not write it at all, or indicate it by the alif. Because of this, many words are disfigured beyond recognition. It was a great help to me, to have among our workmen, several from Quft in Upper Egypt, who pronounce the qāf like hard g. In doubtful cases I had them repeat the words in question, and could thus determine the lacking qāfs.